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ART. II. — *The Art Journal*. New Series. Vol. VIII. Nos. 85–88. January—April, 1862. London: James S. Virtue.

ART is, after all, the business of our century, and war but a passing incident. Christian civilization has reached too great proportions and momentum to be staggered by any shock of arms. In our Northern United States, hardly a sight or sound indicates that the pursuits of peace have been interrupted by our national convulsion. Art and arms are not antithetical. War has its industries and æsthetics, its pomp and circumstance. If murder be a fine art, as De Quincey argues, much more so is war, with its elaborate tools and trappings. Indeed, the artistic in military affairs, from the monstrous crests and rude arms of olden time, down to the forage-cap and rifle of to-day, would form a voluminous history.

With the January number of the time-honored London Art Journal, referred to at the head of this article, begins a new series of engravings on steel, and with the April number commences an illustrated catalogue of the British International Exhibition of 1862. The illustrations, like those of the catalogue of 1851, will no doubt be drawn largely from ornamental art, in the limited sense of the term, and will be regarded by most persons with idle curiosity, or with only a commercial eye, perhaps with but the trifling attention that may be given to the needlework patterns in a lady's magazine. To others, the catalogue and the event it chronicles will have a deep and manifold interest.

The International Exhibition now open emphatically recalls the world's attention to art, and, by striking associations, to some dark events of the last ten years. Our minds are carried back to the original Crystal Palace, then a new architectural wonder, hailed as a splendid symbol of the reign of Victoria and universal peace. Should man, now that he had built the glass house of the proverb, throw stones any more? Should not industry, emplaced more gloriously than Victoria herself, henceforth bear a quiet sway supreme?

" Her court was pure ; her life serene ;
God gave her peace ; her land reposed ;
A thousand claims to reverence closed
In her as mother, wife, and queen.

" She brought a great design to pass,
When Europe and our scattered ends
Of our fierce world were mixt as friends
And brethren in her halls of glass ;

" And statesmen at her council met
Who knew the seasons, when to take
Occasion by the hand, and make
The bounds of freedom broader yet."

By the recent death of the Prince Consort,—one of the most active promoters of the World's Fair of 1851, and the originator of its international breadth of plan,—the queen is no longer wife ; nor has her empire kept its repose, Europe its friendly peace, and the fierce world its brotherhood. After Tennyson's Ode to Victoria, just quoted, the next poem of his that we remember to have seen was the war-song of the Light Brigade at Balaklava. Still later, England was doing battle in India and China. And her statesmen,—have they, during three years past, met in council to seize occasion for enlarging the bounds of freedom in Italy, in Mexico, in the United States ? No sharp questions need be asked, only the sad contrasts noted between the peaceful visions of poetry and the turbulent course of time. And so it will continue to be, in spite of commerce and art, in spite of World's Fairs and pacific queens, until Christianity has worked out the elevation and enfranchisement of every class, the extinction of every oligarchy, in this sense "putting down all rule and all authority and power." Oppression is chronic war, and alone leads to outbreking war ; and class privilege is chronic oppression. Not "the Empire," but a universal and enlightened democracy alone "is peace." When they intelligently rule everywhere whose pursuits and interests are those of peace, then, in Tennyson's words,

" the common sense of most shall hold a fretful realm in awe,
And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in universal law."

The Southern rebellion, and the attitude of Europe toward the United States, have much to do with manufactures and commerce, and these have everything to do with that aspect of art which is indicated in the title of this article, "Ornament in Nature and Art." Not the lighter graces only of Nature, not merely some frivolous appendages to man's work, are embraced in this topic. By ornament, as will hereafter be explained, we mean all in the properties and construction of any object which goes beyond its bare necessity, and is fitted to produce an agreeable effect, especially as related to other objects.

The economical relations of the subject render it one of great importance. Less than two years ago, nearly two millions of dollars were shipped in one day from New York for Europe, mostly to pay for beauty which might have been created at home, and which the Europeans have the wisdom to study in its application to the arts. To the specie annually shipped must be added all exports not of manufactured articles, and not counterbalanced by imports of food and raw material. The old proverb of the Continent has held true of us, after losing much of its force in respect to England,—"The stranger buys of the Englishman the skin of the fox for a groat, and sells him the tail for a shilling." The South and the West have borne to the Northeastern States very much the same relation which the whole country has sustained to other lands. Even an axe-helve, it is said, must go North to be manufactured, to receive its perfect curves and smooth finish from Yankee machinery. Proverbially, rocky New England is prosperous for the immediate reason that it is the work-shop of this continent; and it is such, not in view of its large manufacturing towns only, but because many a house, many a home, is a factory,—many a woman or child is a skilful artisan on her or his own account. Out of New England, Newark and Philadelphia, for example, are noble testimonies to the value of a multiplicity of arts,—in the latter city carried on to a great extent by capitalists of foreign birth, as well as by foreign workmen. What may not be hoped from these sources of wealth, when cities have been built on pins, fortunes accumulated on dolls' eyes, and states enriched by wooden toys?

The ornamental arts are still more significant in reference to the diffusion and increase of human happiness. The beauty of a work is more than half the joy of its production. Moreover, few persons can give much time to music, painting, and the like, while all are continually surrounded with that universal art which is civilization itself, in its materiality. Rising up and sitting down, at home or abroad, in the street or in the cultivated country, we can hardly see or touch anything that is not a piece of human art, and as such either truly or falsely designed, and well or ill finished. They whose life is mostly within doors are especially shut up to human work as their constant visible object of contemplation, entering largely into the formative influences that mould their character and the daily elements that make up their happiness, be they producers, as the most are, or only observers. Everything that pertains to a household, for example, is a work of art, not wonderful only because familiar. The princes of the Japanese embassy, while in New York, examined a large stock of hardware, and purchased nothing but a quantity of tin plates; had they been savages, they would even have decorated themselves with these plates. A tin cup is one of the humblest things that concern us; yet it is as truly an instance of ornamental design as a golden goblet; it has the fundamental elements of beauty; it exhibits the straight line, the circle, angles, the cylinder or cone, proportion, graduated light and shade, surface finish, and perhaps in its handle the infinite curves and infinite shadings which are the secret of most perfect beauty. The goblet has little more. A Scotch writer well remarks: "We are beginning to understand that art is not painting, is not sculpture, merely, but a much larger matter, embracing, with architecture as the mistress, every department of technic production, on the results of which æsthetic meaning may be impressed." For the sake of daily human enjoyment, therefore, we should educate ourselves rightly to produce, select, and enjoy that workmanship which is common. Not many can so much as see, still fewer can possess, the great works of man's hand, pictorial or sculptural; all may be environed with the beautiful.

The highest argument for the arts of design is more dis-

tinctly Christian. One of the grandest features of Christian civilization is an expansion of the former luxuries of the few into the comfort and blessing of the many. In nothing more strikingly than in this is the elevating and equalizing power of the Gospel shown. Imprudence and extravagance, into which the comparatively poor sometimes run, is but an incidental evil, that may well be overlooked in a most pious thankfulness at seeing a mechanic's home better carpeted and as well furnished in every way as were once the rooms of princes, and little less luxuriously than are now the houses of the rich. The silks and velvets of an industrious Irish girl, exchanged for the squalor of a Galway hut, or the rags of an immigrant's American shanty, and as costly as the dress of her mistress, are among the most manifest tokens of the kingdom come and coming. He who can see their bright hues fluttering along the street on a Sunday, and not feel like singing a metre of the seventy-second Psalm, is blind to the signs of "the latter-day glory." Furthermore, it is peculiarly Christian to find nobility and dignity in that which is common, such as the most ordinary appliances of civilized life, even as it is in the same spirit to love and exalt the poor and the outcast. One of the Prophets does not consider it beneath his theme to close his long, sublime message with an allusion to the commonest ornaments and utensils; he crowns his Messianic vision by saying, "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses Holiness to the Lord, and the pots of the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar," — in other words, the least things shall not only be consecrated by the spirit of piety, but also (may we not add?) by the spirit of Divine beauty, investing the very pots of the kitchen with something of the grace that shapes the golden bowls of the altar, and harmonizing all external life with the moral glory of a reformed world, — symbolizing, too, the spirit of the Gospel, which magnifies the humble, and lifts up the degraded.

As already hinted, we have to rid ourselves of the thought that ornament is some gewgaw, some frippery, pinned on or nailed on something else, and which might as well be put off as put on. Many individuals, thus poorly apprehending it, despise the whole matter, except as it may connect itself with

trade. *Ornament*, and its intense derivative word *adorn*, originally mean to beautify, and embrace not only adjuncts, but all which exceeds the primary purpose and necessity of a thing, and is adapted to produce a pleasurable effect, especially of a relative sort. Throw together a mass of discolored materials, without order ; if they be made to enclose a habitable space, protected from wind and rain, you have a house. But if the materials be put together with but the slightest reference to form, hue, or to appearance as involved in situation, the structure at once begins to partake of the ornamental. This quality attaches itself to whatever may be properly said to have shape, color, or place. Color and curve adorn a carved leaf ; the leaf, a moulding ; the moulding, a cornice ; the cornice, a house ; the house, a landscape ; the landscape, a world ; the world, a universe ; yea, the whole universe is but a jewel on the finger of God. We grant that a distinction is to be made when form is thought of simply in respect to mechanical and scientific exigencies ; but this distinction may be dropped, since there is such a thing as "functional beauty," and since all beauty springs from the root of use. All that rightly adorns, as will yet be shown, is a blossoming forth of essential nature, an outflash of essential being. In popular language, the distinction may also be dropped which limits the term *decoration* to adjuncts, and *embellishment* to finish.

It is evident, then, that ornament, in its worthiest sense, includes all beauty, namely, as regarded in certain relations ; that it enters into the very idea of civilization, and of any cosmos, as opposed to chaos ; that it is not this or that piece of superfluous finery stuck upon something and as well slipped off, but is a light and character in which all things may be considered. Manifestly the idea embraces all the art of nature and of man. We speak of ornature, and we think only of a rose-petal, or gold-leaf, or a marble tassel ; but the greatest art-critic has wisely said, (we condense his language,) that "the only essential distinction between decorative and other art is the being fitted for a place, and in that place related to the effect of other pieces of art. The best sculpture yet produced has been the decoration of a temple-front, the best painting the decoration of a room. Raphael's best doing

is merely the wall-coloring of a suite of apartments, and his cartoons were made for tapestries. Titian and Veronese threw out their noblest thoughts, not even on the inside, but on the outside of the common brick and plaster walls of Venice."

We are partly prepared now to reply to certain objections and fallacies,—partly, inasmuch as the whole subject, as it often happens, is the full answer.

The most respectable prejudice against the ornamental arts is the would-be Biblical, — a strange one, for it runs counter to the economy of the Old Testament, and to the silence and the true spirit of the New. The most common temptation to excess of ornament is offered in dress, no doubt; and it is in this connection that the Bible utters an express caution. Yet we are encouraged to believe that God will much more clothe us than the martagon lily, the royally scarlet petals of which are so reflexed into an Oriental turban, or the arches of a modern crown, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as splendidly. It may be urged that all decoration is none the less enfiladed by the apostolic warning, to wit, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with sobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array. We reply, that it is a precept to *adorn*, not the contrary, and that it regulates only the spirit of adornment. Taken, as all Scripture should be taken, not narrowly in the letter, but broadly in the spirit, it is aimed, not at nature's own gold and pearls, but at extravagance, vanity, frivolity; the precious substances named being rather the glowing imagery than the object of the Apostle's thought, and perhaps the Asiatic imagination creating both the peculiar need and the language of the caution. If here, as elsewhere, the Apostle's diction was richly broidered, even when he was discoursing of temperance in dress, much more would the "weaker vessels" be tempted to magnificence of attire. The most abject literalist must at last confess that long hair is as obviously fit to be plaited as silk is to be woven, and that pearls and gold were meant to be ornamental; and that these are no more to be wholly cut off and discarded, than the right hand is literally to be cut off, or the coat formally surrendered when the cloak is taken away.

It is very significant that the New Testament simply restrains one class of persons, and that in respect only to personal use of the arts of decoration.

Another victim of the same prejudice is the religious temple. But if the truths, that God is to be worshipped in spirit and everywhere, and that man is the true temple, forbid the costly and beautiful in Christian architecture, with equal force these truths prohibit the plainest house of prayer. The spirituality of Christianity is the antithesis simply of evil passions, and heartless religion, and a low morality ; its simplicity is not opposed to complexity of art and of thought, but to guile and false philosophy. The high qualities mentioned are, in fact, antagonistic to this mole-eyed interpretation, which would belittle and materialize the Scriptures into teaching a gospel, not of Christian life, but of architecture poor in spirit, of humble steeples, of meek carpets, of mournful coats, of penitent bonnets, and, if possible, of faded roses, and songless birds. The final reign of Christianity is rather pictured in all the magnificence of a city walled with jewels ; and “ they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it,” not exclude that glory and honor.

In the name of religion or morality, still other objections are brought, such as, that life is too brief and solemn for the arts of beauty, and that works of duty and charity demand all our time and resources. But is life too short and serious, are duty and charity too exacting, for the great multitude of laborers to earn their bread by work that is and must be decorative in no small degree ? — to earn it, too, in the spirit of a dull, mechanical task, producing false and lifeless art, whereas, if they and others were to give thought and heart to the subject, their toil might be education and joy to them, to all ? True seriousness, true benevolence, should not overlook considerations so palpable and weighty. To a like plausible fallacy, that the arts of embellishment lead to corruption of manners and of faith, we reserve a reply, only remarking that Christianity inspires to high civilization, and its ecclesiastical annals point to enough clear causes of its debasement without numbering the arts among them, — only repeating, also, the sentiment of the great reformer of corrupt faith, that Satan should not have all the good music.

The exception taken in the name of beauty itself is more subtle, namely, that beauty unadorned is adorned the most, an adage which every artist, every woman, knows to be false, except as it goes against ill-judged ornament. There is no line nor tint the loveliness of which is not dependent on accessories, and may not be enhanced by a studied disposition of the same. But, granting the literal truth of the proverb, to what does beauty owe its beauty if not to its own ornate qualities?

We hardly need pause to notice other fallacies, such as those which assume the name of simplicity, economy, utility. The human body, the most glorious of all visible objects, is a living answer; nothing is more truly simple, economical, useful; nothing more exquisitely beautified by the hand of God, — every detail of beauty growing out of utility, indeed. A scarecrow is not the ideal of simplicity, the genius of starvation is not that of economy, and utility is not mere bread and butter. All possible prejudice in this matter of ornament is a setting up of the false against the true, or a lower good against a higher, and is to be excused only so far as it is excited by meretricious display.

To treat with disdain the idea of ornament, to depreciate it, is a curling of the lip at the universe itself. It is, in fact, the distorting of a feature of the face, which, like every other feature, is not squared nor rounded by gross simplicity, not left colorless or neutral in tint, not projected on the mechanical principles of low economy and utility, but is a wonderful complication of every flowing line and graduated shade of beauty, and tinged with all depths of red, from the carnation of the high light to the dark crimson of the shadow, as if Nature had spent all her art in its ornamentation, — that is to say, if, in the presumed instance, the feature be well formed; if badly shapen, it is not to be supposed that a deformity would be thrust into notice even to express contempt, so that the very act, if ventured on, is a virtual surrender of the question.

The universe, every inch of it, is enriched with the most finished and prodigal adorning, — every atom, if we descend into the microscopic world. If we accept the received opin-

ion that external nature was degraded and disordered by the first shock of human sin, or that it was from the beginning conformed to a prospective history of sin and death, still whatever significance nature has in this direction must be regarded as an expressiveness finely worked out in every detail by Divine art; so that each seeming instance of earth's imperfection and woe, pointing to man's, is at the worst but as the beautiful inverted torch sculptured on tombs, or the broken column or broken flower, carefully designed as such by the sculptor, for sepulchral monument and tablet. There are other reasons, however, without overstraining the one now mentioned, why there seems to be some lack or discord in the garniture of nature; and every reason implies an exceeding appreciation of beauty in the mind of the Creator, not an undervaluation of it at all; so that, in this world of thorns and thistles, out of the very nettle — supposed neglect — we pluck the flower of beauty.

Is there, in nature, that which we call desolation? It will be found a finished picture, so intricate that no artist can copy it all. The most barren rock, the bleakest coast, is an infinite mystery of charming form and color. Nature so loves ornament that she drapes and embroiders ruin itself, and stains it with her mellowest hues, often her richest; she makes haste, indeed, to throw over the crumbling works of man a pall of mossy velvet and gold. Are there great blanks, as we deem them, of bark and body, of cliff, plain, and sea? Here and there power is to be shown in sublime masses, and therefore the surface as distantly seen is not to be broken up; yet those masses are full of charming detail, every part of them is costly mosaic. Further, there is a unity in creation, which, like all unity, is of things similar, — in a sense monotonous, — as in the waves and colors of the sea, the leaves and colors of a landscape; and that unity is a heightening, not a lowering, of beauty; there is no true variety even but in such unity. Is there, nevertheless, much quietness in the general effects of nature, and in many individual effects? Chasteness and sobriety are not the absence of embellishment, rather a manner of it; the absence is poverty and dead vacancy, abhorrent to nature. This character, also, disappears on close

examination ; the homeliest sparrow, no less than a bird of paradise, is a wonder of color in every feather and of grace in every filament ; the quiet sky, in every point of its space, is living and delectable color, and the whole is arched and graduated in tint, in every part ; a dull November or March landscape, to those who have learned to see, is a marvel of exquisite grays, purples, and browns, as well as a wonderful net-work of naked stems.

But, is it said, thus are actual, shapeless blotches on almost everything ? They are often necessary, as Ruskin observes, to show the loveliness of color, which is best seen when separated from form ; as, for example, when dashed across the plumage of birds, without regard to the shape or direction of the feathers. Is it affirmed that there is positive inferiority in many created things ? It is an inferiority in degrees of beauty, rather than absence of the quality ; and the reasons for it exalt the quality, instead of cheapening it. In those animals, and other objects, which symbolize to us the appetites and passions, or the unpleasant realities of life, there should be fewer elements of the agreeable, as the same author has remarked ; and, as he well argues, all things that are inferior in office, likewise, would degrade beauty if largely endowed with it. Of this class, for example, are nature's scavengers. But the glorious reason is, that, by degrees of the beautiful, God would teach us the very idea, unrecognized if all things were equally lovely : by degrees, as by a stairway, he would invite, incite, and lead us upward in the knowledge and reproduction of the beautiful.

For the rest, admitting that the Creator always illustrates in his own work the great law of moderation, it may be affirmed that the world is the very perfection of beauty, viewed as consistent with the moral and other ends proposed in its constitution. His work cannot but be perfect, for its purpose. When any man has exhausted Nature, has done more than to recombine her glories in his imaginings, has conceived something different and better, then may there be reason to talk of a physical perfection not to be found in her. It may even be asserted, that, if the visible creation had been formed for beauty alone, it would not have been made other

than it is, certainly not as the first stage of our existence. We have no reason to believe that the physical elements of heaven itself are not all present in this scene of being, differently combined. And for all that seems exceptional in this scene, our argument has still one reserved thought; it is that Nature may designedly indulge in what are called her "rests and monotones," may even interpose discords to emphasize the very harmonies of her loveliness and grandeur.

Let it be repeated, therefore, that every inch of the universe is enriched with the most finished and prodigal adorning possible, under any given circumstances. Flowers and sunsets are not exceptions; lavish beauty and delicate detail are the rule. If we look at plain granite, it is as if its variant mixtures of white, black, and rose crystals were the one thing worth attending to; and yet the globe is a cabinet of minerals endlessly diverse. If we glance at leaves, — the sober accompaniments of blossoming snow and ripened sunshine, — it is as if the mere notching of leaves were the one matter of great importance in Nature's estimation; yet there are twelve hundred varieties of the lily tribe to be looked after, to say nothing of a hundred thousand species of plants. If we turn to the animal world, it is as if all things were to be neglected rather than the polishing and gilding of a poor beetle's wings; yet there are eighty thousand known species of insects, not to mention two hundred and fifty thousand kinds of animals. Moreover, not one individual rock, plant, animal, not one foot of land, wave of sea, film of cloud, is to be slighted. So it is, from the gorgeous tropics to the sable and eider, the bergs and auroras of the arctic, misnamed desolate; and from the sparry depths of caves, and coral abysses of the ocean, to the moss on the purple mountain-tops. Nor is anything too prosaic in its uses to be wholly untouched with beauty; not a tooth but must be of carved ivory. Nor is anything too perishable to be worthy of precious ornature; the bloom that endures but for a night, is painted as if to last forever. Nothing is too evanescent to receive the finest touches of grace; surf and vapor are as perfect as if they were not to change instantly and glide away. Nothing is too far out of man's sight to be elaborately finished; every berry of the wilderness or

prism of the sealed rock is carefully manipulated as if for a world's fair. Nor is it enough that Nature's decorations are beautiful; they overflow the brim of beauty often, and run into the quaint, the grotesque, the grand, as if through mere excess of decorative fancy and energy; the ornamental smile of creation broadens into humor, and even into what may be termed the playful-terrible.

And all these original phenomena of things are not enough; every transformation by man's hand brings forth some hidden tissue, or graining, or coloring; the very tints and lustres of our daily food might well so ravish the sight as to stay the appetite. Nay, exuberant Nature is not satisfied when man changes her from glory to glory; she is ever attiring herself anew in every growth and process. The seasons bring each its wonders, and together they continually turn that mighty prism of the year which successively tinges a zone with the delicate azure of snow, the tender green of spring, the gold of harvest, the fiery reds of autumn, thus throwing upon the earth in regular order the most observable hues of the solar spectrum. To crown all, night and day, reflection and shadow and breeze, are forever playing with shape and tint, so that the tuft of cherry-leaves nodding at your window is a little universe of ever-varying and numberless curves and colors and lights, not content with its own opaque green, but momentarily borrowing shade from the earth, mellow brown from the adjacent building, warm glow from transparency, sheen from sunshine, and many a touch of far-brought cool blue from the sky. In truth, so changeful are the aspects of sea and sky, that, every instant, we have everywhere a new universe, revealing itself suddenly, and then vanishing, never precisely to reappear. If there be any place where they would find a fit home, who disparage the beautiful and ornate, it is a desert of sand; yet even there every grain of sand is a jewel, the mirage glimmers like a dream of Eden, the sky at morning and evening makes itself royal; even there the Artesian well they must sink would overflow the sands with emerald, the corn they must plant would wave its purple plumes, and trees would spring into arches and crowns.

Nature further pleads for the arts of embellishment in the

voice of human instinct. It cannot be said that, while it is well for Omnipotence to adorn, it is not for man to do his best, or to do much, in this line of effort. God himself has fired the soul with unquenchable activities in the direction of the beautiful. It is a well-proven fact, that the first thought of the untutored savage is to decorate himself, his instruments, and his rude shelter. In the order of nature the ornamental comes before the useful. Every step of civilization is an advance in the same order; the high-backed, stately carved chair, comes before the luxurious fauteuil. Instinct is on the side of embellishment; and so, too, is that great natural law in vindication of which the gravest and most reverend authorities might be cited, showing how closely the elegances of life are connected with manners and morals. Passing by this tempting branch of the subject, let it only be observed that the earth is receiving modifications on a stupendous scale, by the sciences and machineries of this century; and the question left to us is, shall man replace and reproduce natural beauty in his works, or displace and destroy? Shall he make or mar?

By way of giving a more practical turn to the subject, and further illustrating it, a few of the many principles of ornamentation may be added. In the absence of any work, within our reach or knowledge, that is both systematic and exhaustive in respect to such principles, we can only gather a few of them here and there, mostly from the voluminous writings of Ruskin.

First, as to form and color. In the words of the author just named, "the first necessity of beauty in color is gradation, as the first necessity of beauty of line is curvature; the second necessity in color is mystery and subtilty, as the second necessity of line is softness." He adds, "The finer the eye for color, the less it will require to gratify it intensely." These remarks are founded in deep philosophy. The flowing line, the shaded delicate or indescribable tint, or combination of tints, involve that grand law of beauty, proportion, and that grander law, infinity, the attribute of the God of whose being beauty is the reflex. In nature, it has been noticed, there are few straight lines, or even regular curves, still fewer raw or unrefined

colors; and many things that seem to have these qualities will be found to have them only in a comparative degree. Owen Jones lays down the principle, that the straight line, the inclined, and the circle, are to be combined always to balance one another,—that is, we suppose, when any one of these elements is so present as to give character to a composition; and he further decides that all junctions of curves with curves or with straight lines should be tangential. But there is no space here to give in detail the principles of ornamental composition, nor so much as to enter upon the complicated and interesting subject of color, one of the most neglected or else most misunderstood of all arts.

The next and most commanding principle is that decoration should grow out of the mass, and be expressive of function, whenever this is possible. Use should be the root, ornament the branch and bloom. Thus the original projections of rafter and tie-beam, afterward cut in stone, became the distinguishing features of the Grecian cornice; the feet of Egyptian chairs, in fanciful reference to their use, were carved as lion's paws. It is the manner of Nature. Every undulation of the body is founded on some hidden muscle or bone. The human ear, because the beautiful shape is allied to the function of the ear, is wrought into a sea-shell; the eyelashes, necessary to protect the eye, are a fringed curtain, admirable for beauty as well as in office. In art, the happiest lines are often positively necessitated by use, not merely suggested thereby, as in the form of a scythe-handle, a ploughshare, a ship. The associations of use, likewise, may govern the embellishment, as in the marine figures of a fountain. Above all, the entire shape of a thing should spring from its central idea, its heart. The farm-house, according to the doctrine of architectural books, has its centre and heart in the great farm laboratory, the kitchen, and around this apartment and its adjuncts should be grouped all parts of the house. This heart of a thing, as well as the living spirit and inner necessity that breathe in all true form and decoration, justifies an accommodated use which has been made of the words, "Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning, but let it be the hidden man of the *heart*." Thus would unity of design be secured, no less than expressiveness.

A third principle is, that ornament may be conventional, or must be so under certain circumstances and conditions. This conventionality, at which a semi-educated taste sometimes revolts, is not altogether unnatural and sophisticated. It is affirmed that ornament in the early and purest ages of art is always conventional. A child's first attempts at drawing are in the conventional or abstract style, however rude. An irregular circle, with a smaller circle superimposed, two lateral straight lines and two descending ones projecting from the lower circle, and two dots placed in the upper, that is a child's abstract picture of a man; and there is more wisdom in it than we think. Nature cannot, or should not, always be followed closely in art. Material forbids it, as in the sculpturing of waves or delicate flowers; the general effect may be given, but anything more is either a failure or a piece of trickery that denies the material. Wall-paper may give suggestions of foliage, not close imitations, which the materials and process preclude; blue leaves of unexampled form, connected by impossible branches, are a wise confession of inability, and of a purpose, limited by conditions, only to hang pleasing color on a tracery of hinted vegetation. Position often forbids; for instance, where a high or an obscure place renders everything invisible but a rough outline; or where a flat surface demands flat patterns: the flowers and other figures of a carpet should not be so perfectly wrought that we are led to believe ourselves crushing down flowers at every step, or walking on a prostrate trellis. Office, again, prohibits a too naturalistic method. Beauty should not be degraded by too nice detail in the embellishment of a barn or a gross utensil. So also color may call for conventionality. In drapery, the prominence of the idea of color, as well as the flowing and folding of the material, protest against a close imitation of nature in the forms and colors of the figure. In general, the more perfect the form, where the form is advantageously seen, the less perfect should be the color. Geometric patterns may be very vivid; a vine in outline less so; a vine in sculptured relief should be left as simple marble or wood; it would belie nature and itself if stained, whether or not in natural hues. Conventionality is further recommended by the subordination of

parts to a whole; by the nature of some ornamentation as mere signs and symbols; by the perishableness of certain substances as material for human work; by the personal use of the decoration; and by the repetitious character of the figure, the repetition demanding a less amount of organic form, a lower grade of it, and a slighter degree of realization. Such are some of the eternal laws of fitness that regulate even the patterns of calico.

A fourth principle is honesty. All falsehoods and shams ought to be avoided. The innocent lie is the worst, in effect if not in intention, because the most common, the most insinuating, the least observed, and the least excused by temptation, whereas the black and malicious lie is at once detected and abhorred. The world is continually in danger of being frozen and buried under a snow-fall of soft white lies, sifting in at every crevice, blinding every eye, covering up all truth, and smothering all life. Painted imitations of wood and stone are enough to mention as illustrations. There are exceptions to the general rule, doubtless, that could be justified by worthy reasons; gilding is thought to be an instance, since it is gold, and does not pretend to be solid.

Another law of ornament is, that it should not be largely associated with scenes of care and toil, such as factories, shops, stores, nor with anything disagreeable. We have seen a drug-store more expensively and elegantly fitted up with cabinets of carved wood, than possibly any private library in the world. The more beautiful the work and material, the more objectionable it is in such use, because associated with that which is not only prosaic, but unpleasant. Just indignation has been expressed at the use of the choicest Greek mouldings in dry-goods shops, where they are common, cheap, and out of place. The rule applies to dress, furniture, and implement, as well as to building. Decoration, the more so if it be precious, is for scenes of rest, — home, the house of prayer, the place of pleasure, — wherever we have leisure to enjoy it, and delightful or lofty thoughts to link with it, unmingled with trouble and weariness. Moreover, sights have the effect of sounds; we want the beautiful to talk to us when we can listen; we do not want the noise of much form, color, gilding, added to the

buzz of business and the clatter of work, particularly if the style of decoration be what is well called stunning. But we cannot agree with Ruskin that the appurtenances of railroads should be divested of all pleasant art; there is enough of waiting and rest, recreation and poetry, in railway travelling to justify the ornamentation of stations and cars.

A sixth rule is temperance and repose. Children, whenever they begin to play, proverbially never know when to stop. So with that lively child, Fancy. God and Nature have set us a wise example, even in the richest natural effects. Freedom is glorious, but is glorious chiefly because it enters into the idea of self-restraint. There are occasions, however, when man can hardly run to an extreme in a true, not false, ornature. Home should be made as visibly pleasant as possible. Public buildings, representing the collective wealth and wisdom of a community, can hardly be too excellent. The church edifice calls especially for the spirit of sacrifice in costly material and labor. What can be more admirable, for example, than the broad, high-reaching, highly sculptured front entrance of the old Gothic churches, throwing wide a passage to all mankind, inviting all with profuse beckonings of beauty, and lifting up the arch for the King of Glory himself to come in! To him were brought the gold and frankincense, to him the precious box of alabaster. If his simple spirit and polity are sometimes buried under a needless pride and ostentation, it is better that riches be so expended than directly on self. "He made his *grave* with the rich."

To this enumeration of a few general principles, a fitting rear-guard may be found in the rule that all ornament should be inspired by the study of Nature, and regulated by her immutable laws, though not always a literal copying of her forms. It should convey as much natural truth as possible, consistently with its principles. To this end, each nation should draw from the storehouse of its own familiar scenery.

" O thou sculptor, painter, poet !
Take this lesson to thy heart :
That is best which lieth nearest ;
Shape from that thy work of art."

The Egyptians built their pillars in the forms of the lotus, the

bulrush, the papyrus, and the palm. The Greeks adopted their own acanthus and honeysuckle. The Gothic workers selected the oak, ivy, fern, and even the common dock and parsley. It has been well argued that all debasement of art, and all enervation of character in connection with the fine arts, have been through want of sympathy with and adherence to Nature. Certainly both man and his work must be invigorated and ennobled by communion with Nature, and by reproduction of her truths, her freshness, and her loveliness. In this way — this one of the “Two Paths” — ornament would never become

“ but the gilded shore
To a most dangerous sea ; the beauteous scarf
Veiling an Indian beauty ; in a word,
The seeming truth which cunning times put on
To entrap the wisest.”

Every child, every youth, should learn to draw directly from nature, beginning, it may be, with a turnip, seldom copying pictures, never copying them if they are not by the great masters of pictorial truth. The visible results of right practice might be little, and worth little ; fond parents might not be able to point visitors to monstrosities framed in gold, and very admirable in the obsolete sense of the word ; but the invisible results of earnest pursuit of the right method would be sublime, — new eyes received, a vast, new world of nature and art revealed, and pure healthfulness of taste and soul inspired. Ruskin’s “Elements of Drawing” goes far to supply the needed guide, but unfortunately refers the student to many things beyond his reach, if not beyond his pecuniary ability also ; and the study of the human figure, recommended by this author as indispensable to excellence and purity in all art, ornamental or more technically fine, requires other manuals. In every institution of learning, the arts of design, especially of decoration, should be taught, both theoretically and practically. Many persons might find pecuniary profit in design ; many are themselves destined to be artisans ; many more would have some direct influence on mechanics and manufacturers ; all would be disciplined, would be educated in that most fundamental of all respects, the knowledge of things in distinction from other men’s thoughts about things ;

and all would help to create a right supply in the market, by becoming discreet purchasers, and would aid in many ways the development of that feeling for art which is half the prosperity of any nation.

We have mostly adhered to the common and narrow acceptance of the word *ornament* in stating the above principles. Of course it would be impossible within the limits of this article to attempt a statement of the more frequently discussed principles of those high arts which, as we have seen, are ornamental in their original idea and application.

There is ample need of a wider and profounder attention to this whole subject than has ever yet been given; great need of a systematic, popular, and exhaustive treatise. Other errors may often be impenetrable, but bad taste is easily shamed out of countenance by holding up to it the mirror of nature. If we were to sum up the greatest and most common violations of the principles of beauty in this land, we should mention cheap extravagance, cheap falsehood, baldness, squareness, and imitative monotony, relieved only by occasional foolish novelty. We are cheap; we build, make, buy, for the hour, not for permanence. We are, nevertheless, often extravagant and barbarous in taste; gilding everything to excess, and thus depreciating the preciousness of golden effect; making small carpets with figures designed for the great halls of the Tuileries, — glaring colors, and roses as large as cabbages; dresses with spread-eagle patterns; marble stores like palaces, even furnished with ebony inlaid with mock-gold. We are false; — every door, wall, pail, grained or marbled, to the obliteration of the truer and more beautiful graining of nature; every ceiling stuccoed; the interior of churches covered with trickeries of form and color; and, until recently, all furniture veneered, whereas our native woods are abundantly varied and rich. We are most unnaturally bare and square; — the men cut and patterned into angles and straight lines, from the top of the hat to the toe of the boot; the women striped and plaided; crockery inclining to be angular; every house an exact cube or parallelopiped; windows alike and square, and set at regular intervals, not combined, or varied, or projected; the outer walls blank, with no hint of inner

construction ; the building and blinds raw in color ; the village street forbidden to wind gracefully up and down, hither and thither, but ambitious to be city-like, and graded into eternal levels, and crossing at everlasting right-angles. We are fashionably monotonous and fickle ; — all buildings copies of one another, without regard to owner and use, so that a man hardly knows whether he is entering his neighbor's house or his own, — if not copied full size, then in miniature, like a martin-cage ; all furniture and dress aspiringly and drearily alike, — if not costly, then cheaply imitative. When the style of anything changes, the entire nation hastens to follow, pellmell.

The unsettled problems of the subject, such as the claims of styles, their application to newly-used material, and the merits of hand-work as opposed to that of machinery, must be left untouched, with the single remark, that it seems unwise and useless to bemoan the present confusion of styles, instead of accepting it as either a step-stone or cap-stone to the cosmopolitan character the human race is rapidly assuming. Nor is it in our way now to follow the topic up into the impalpable region of language and music.

The marrow and soul of ornament would be lost to us, however, if we were to overlook its sentiment and significance. By this is intended something more than the analogy between the finished graces of art and those of character ; — the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, the cherished parental instruction worn as an ornament of grace unto the head and chains about the neck, the wisdom that is as rubies and jewels of fine gold, — these are the realities of which material adornment is the shadow and figure. Nor do we refer to the truth that all ornament is language, and that many ideas and feelings may be conveyed by it, general and specific. The sentiment and meaning of it all, we think, may be summed up in one bright word, — joy, — the joy of life, of superabounding vitality, faculty, power, resource, divine and human, which not only work, but work with will and pleasure, rejoicing and playing over the work, not driven by stern necessity to a labor that looks only to bare necessity and barren utility. To all who have eyes to see, ornament in nature and art is a gospel, — glad tidings of mighty life and inexhaustible resource, in a

word, of infinity, speaking forth in all the work of God and of man, and saying, "I can not only make, I can adorn, and all shall be to me but happy play, my work my joy," and straightway leaping and sparkling into ornament as the fulness of the sea breaks into crests of foam. In this there is perhaps an affirmation and revelation of the immortal superiority of the spiritual to the material, so that even a bit of embroidery or the streak of an apple may be an evangel of all that which Christianity teaches in common with natural religion, not omitting the priceless worth and equal rights of the individual man.

Such would be a popular statement of the truth. But the ornamental enters into the very idea of life and of a universe, not alone into the idea of abounding life. Shall we look more deeply into the matter, at the risk of being misty or mystical? Life, in its simplest aspect, is defined by Guyot as "a mutual exchange of relations," and he finds it in "the lively actions and reactions, the perpetual play of the forces of matter," — "its incessant and prodigious activity," — no less than within the narrower limits of animal and vegetable organism. No thought has been to us so fruitful, none has led to so clear a perception of the essential unity of all great ideas, as well as the correspondence between all departments of being. Indeed, the thought seems to be wrapped up in the derivation of the very word *universe*. The definition applies to and explains all manner of life, intellectual, social, commercial, moral, Christian, no less than cosmical. But the point is, that life consists in exchange, in action and reaction. And it is evident to all observers that life and beauty most abound together. Where chemical life acts with greatest intensity in mineral elements, there the crystal is born and multiplied in its highest perfection. Where light and heat are most powerfully present, in connection with all vegetable constituents, there are luxuriance and bloom and wealth of color. Where all modes of life, spiritual and other, meet in man, there is the crown of natural forms; and most lovely when the overflowing vitality of childhood is yet unexpended. The reason is this: the beauty of a line or color depends on its purity, and purity is synonymous with energy, as Ruskin has shown. It is the presence of weakness, decay, death, that deform and discolor, or simply neutralize all glow and shapeli-

ness. The vigorous tree is perfect; the flowing stream — well called “living” — is pure and sparkling. This energy that purifies, perfects, beautifies, is life, for life is an interplay of energies. Life, then, of necessity evolves beauty; and its free, right interactions, without disorder or obstruction, are joy itself, — “the oil of joy” as it were, so smooth and pleasurable is the normal movement of all spiritual and physical machinery. Hence the great import of the words “eternal life,” as expressive of blessedness, and the phrase “beauty of holiness,” that is to say, the beauty of wholeness and health, for the three words have a common root. It is the beauty of a complete being that evolves pure, and therefore beautiful, moral colors and lines and lights, and even physical, by the force of its living and unswerving energies, the parts acting well together, and the whole in harmonious working with other beings and external objects. Moreover, since fancy and imagination are the powers most prominent in ornamentation, it is in ornament especially that we feel the presence of a free, spontaneous, and thus happy, activity or life; for imagination and fancy are the very faculties which, in our experience, work most easily, untiringly, involuntarily; these are the faculties that are awake in sleep, needing not the repose that other powers of the mind demand; the working of these we most often designate as play. Because the involuntary right action of all its powers, even of the “will” itself, expresses the soul’s perfect state, therefore it is in the production of the beautiful — largely due to self-acting and tireless fancy — that we may best behold the ideas of joy, purity, energy, life. It is well called “creative” work, even when human; it is such in its divine happiness and pure vital power, as well as in reference to the results it originates. And here we might add, that there is indeed an evil energy, a false joy and beauty, in the realm of art as in that of morals; but it is disordered power, often more intense in its brief abnormal activity than is regulated power; and it is a wondrous confirmation of the foregoing remarks, that even then, as vital energy, it must produce at least a semblance of joy and beauty, — the joy of delirium and the beauty of death.

Ornamental art smiles to us in every playful line and cheerful color; we have attempted to explain why. With the

happy life inherent in art are mingled other joys ; — gladness in the infinite gradations and boundless variations of curve, color, and shading ; gladness that sympathizes with the workman's pleasant work and success ; gladness that throbs in unison with the life of nature suggested in decoration, the delight of fellow-feeling with God's rejoicing creatures ; the happiness also of living over the past as recorded in man's work, and being thrilled with the struggles, hopes, and pleasures of ages gone by ; the happiness, above all, of co-working with the Spirit who, as the all-indwelling life, garnished the heavens and the earth, and conspiring with and emulating the Lord of the old and the new creation ; the happiness, finally, of that reconciled conscience and purified heart without which we are insensible to the beauty of beauty, without which the loveliest forms are discords and accusing witnesses, and the gold of heaven would be dim.

But as all things have their sweetest beginning and ending in love, so has this subject. The life that breathes in works of beauty, like all vitality, is love ; for life, according to the definition above given, is a mutual exchange, a giving and taking, and that is love. " And all that life is love," sings the hymn, more profound than its intention. The lowest life — the chemical — works by affinities ; much more each higher. All this aside, however, it is the beautiful that is chosen for the gifts of friendship ; and there is in all beautiful production an affection that learns all its wisdom and skill through loving regard to nature, that toils for the sake of some who are dear, that beautifies only when it fondly lingers and plays over its work like sunshine on the mountains, and that does all, or should do all, as an adoring service and sacrifice to the God of beauty, the infinite love. A gospel of love, no less than of life, may be found in all that is ornamental in human effort, while in the delicate beauty of nature there is superadded the truth of Divine grace, the more signal because mingled with judgment. In every dainty flower the gentleness of God would arrest the feet of indifference and recklessness, in every wavy outline of a landscape his tenderness writes itself, in every touch of light and every bright color his mercy smiles, and in every harmless and graceful creature he plays with his children of filial heart.